



Callie Gale Heilmann
President & Co-Director
Bridgeport Generation Now, Bridgeport, CT

H.B. 5356 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING PANDEMIC PAY FOR ESSENTIAL WORKERS
H.B. 5353 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING A FAIR WORK WEEK SCHEDULE

Good afternoon Senator Kushner, Representative Porter, and the distinguished members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee. My name is Callie Gale Heilmann, I live in Bridgeport, CT and I am the President and Co-Director of Bridgeport Generation Now, a resident-led civic engagement organization with over 300 members - and a member of Recovery For All.

On behalf of our members, I am here to testify in support of HB No. 5356: An Act Concerning Pandemic Pay for Essential Workers. We also strongly support H.B. 5353, an Act Concerning A Fair Work Week Schedule.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, while my Co-Director Gemeem Davis and I were able to work from home and the safety of our small office, we saw first hand how this global pandemic and public health emergency deeply affected our Bridgeport family, friends, neighbors, and members.

From our healthcare workers, to public facility employees, from grocery store clerks, to transportation workers, all of these people labored full-time during the worst days of the pandemic, exposing themselves and their families to this deadly virus - which as of today has killed 6 million people worldwide.

Essential work can be hidden in plain sight. At our trash-to-energy plant, known locally as Wheelabrator, for example, the workers who are already engaged in dangerous working conditions while burning trash never stopped working. This Bridgeport facility processes approx. 2,250 tons of waste/day and produces 67MW of energy, burning the garbage of Bethany, Bridgeport, East Haven, Easton, Fairfield, Milford, Monroe, Orange, Shelton, Stratford, Trumbull, Westport, Woodbridge.

It was during the pandemic in 2020 that the Wheelabrator workers - many of whom are Bridgeport residents - successfully unionized with the International Union of Operating Engineers Local 30, and started negotiating a first contract with WIN Waste Innovations in an effort to improve their working conditions and secure their rights. That fight has

been ongoing for over one year and they still do not have a fair contract with their employer.

The workers at the facility in Bridgeport are essential workers and continued to serve our community and surrounding communities during the pandemic. We recognize their commitment to our City and their sacrifice during this pandemic and stand in solidarity with them - and with all essential workers - who deserve to have pandemic pay.

Economic relief - and the recovery we need - is more than election-year tax cuts. The hundreds of thousands of essential workers across the public and private sectors, especially workers of color and women workers, who risked their lives to keep society afloat haven't yet received any pandemic pay.

At a time when the state is facing an enormous budget surplus and the Rainy Day Fund is overflowing, surely we can allocate funding to compensate the essential workers who have sacrificed so much during this historic crisis. We ask the committee to pass H.B. 5356 to support those who supported us during these risky and frightening times.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify,
Callie Gale Heilmann
Bridgeport, CT